Using Questioning Techniques to enhance your customer service

Time: 30 minutes

Every time we speak to a customer, it's an opportunity for us to delight them and demonstrate a great service.

How we use questions to find information from customers can impact on their perception of the service they've been given. Wherever possible, in situations where we need a significant amount of information we need to use questions as part of a seamless conversation.

Interesting quote

"Successful people ask better questions, and as a result, they get better answers"

Tony Robbins - Author

When you're talking to customers to find out more about what they need you need to demonstrate that you're doing your very best to help them and are really interested in both them and what they want
.
How can you do this? By asking the right questions to find out exactly what you need to know.

The key to giving your customer the best possible service and helping them to get what they need, is to make sure you know all of the facts before offering up a solution. Where customers haven't provided the information you need volunarily, the only way you'll find this information out is by asking them.

This activity is going to look at the different types of questions you can use to find out information from customers and how by using a mix of them, will help you gather all of the relevant information you'll need to help them.

The goal of this session	What you'll need for this session
To identify the different types of questions you can use when helping a customer.	Note paper Pens Character ideas for 'Who Am I?' game

The Aim of this session:-

To investigate different questioning techniques and to share best practice around how to use them effectively when gathering the information you need to be able to help a customer.

Ask:

First I want to do a quick re-cap to see what you know about questioning techniques already.

What questioning techniques have you heard of or learned about in the past?

Look for responses to include:

- Open
- Closed
- Probing

Ask what the difference is between an open and a closed question

Look for responses to include:

- Open questions tend to allow for more information to be given
- Closed questions are more likely to get yes or no answers

Ask what words do open questions tend to start with?

Look for responses to include:

- Who
- What
- Why
- How
- When
- Where
- Which

Note for Activity Session Facilitator:

The next section of the activity focuses on how your team use questions in their role at the moment. You'll need to bring your own experience of your department to bring this to life. You may find it useful to pre-prepare some answers ahead of the session.

Ask team to give you some examples of open questions they use when speaking to customers about their needs/ queries.

Ask why they use these specific examples. What do they find most useful about asking these questions in their role?

Ask team to give you some examples of closed questions they use in this situation too.

Ask if anyone has heard of TED questions.

Look for responses to include:

- Tell
- Explain
- Describe

Ask why these types of questions can be useful?

Look for responses to include:

These types of questions:-

- help to paint a picture
- can get a lot more detailed information

Tell the team that the final two types of questions they might have come across are:

- Probing/ Follow up
- Leading

Ask team members to describe what they understand from the term probing/follow up question?

Look for responses to include:

Probing or follow up questions can be used to 'drill down' a little further following an open question to gather more specific information.

Explain that advisers might use words like:-

- specifically
- exactly
- approximately

Ask team members to tell you more about leading questions. What do they understand by the term leading question?

Look for responses to include:

- A question that prompts or encourages the answer you're looking for or expect.
- A question put or framed in such a way as to suggest the answer sought to be obtained by the person asking the question.

Ask advisers to think about some of the information they need from customers when trying to establish exactly what a customer needs. How might they mistakenly ask a customer a leading question?

Ask for specific examples.

Note for Activity Session Facilitator:

On the back of each example ask advisers to think of a way of rewording the leading question into a more appropriate one which wouldn't lead the customer to an answer.

Tell advisers now you've talked about the different sorts of questions they can ask to find out the additional information you might need from customers to help them it's time to put this learning to good use.

Activity

I'd like us to use a range of questions to help us play the game 'Who am I'. One team member will be given the name of a famous person who they are representing. The rest of the group has the opportunity to ask them up to 20 questions to work out who they are.

The purpose of the game is to use different questions to find out information and more widely to show how limiting the types of questions we ask limits the information we receive.

Action

- Depending on the time you have available determines how many characters you choose to have the team guess.
- Don't let any of the players see the names until the game starts.
- The names can represent celebrities, animated characters, storybook characters, historical figures, political personalities or even team members.
- Don't make them so obscure or difficult that people give up.
- Ahead of the activity write a variety of names on individual pieces of paper or post-it notes to give out to the team. Example characters are listed below if you wanted to print them out to use instead.

- Ask for a volunteer to act as a character and give them one of the pre-prepared character names
- Tell everyone the rules. Each person gets 20 "yes or no" questions to find out who they are. For instance, they can ask, Are you a real person?" "Are you male?" "Am I alive?" "Did I invent something?" "Am I in a current movie?" and so forth. The questions cannot be either/or questions like "Am I male or female?"
- Whoever guesses correctly first wins the game.
- No hints are allowed, unless everyone is stuck and can't figure out who they are.
- Vary the game by using the names of objects instead of people and characters.
- At the end of the session ask how other types of questions might have helped get to the answer quicker.
- What other questions would have been particularly useful? E.g. Who are you? What's your name? What do you do for a living?

Agree Actions

- Following the feedback, ask them to come up with:

    - One thing they're going to stop doing.
    - One thing they'll continue to do.
    - One thing they'll start doing or do differently.

'Who Am I?' - Ideas for Characters	
Albert Einstein	David Beckham
Arnold Schwarzenegger	Kermit the Frog
Mickey Mouse	Simon Cowell
SpongeBob	George Clooney
Elvis	Madonna
Brad Pitt	Michael Jackson
Harry Potter	Ron Weasley
Gandalf	Demi Moore
Angelina Jolie	The Queen
Prince William	Barack Obama
David Cameron	Winston Churchill
Lewis Hamilton	Jenson Button